

18 November 1959

Bill -

Seymour, Jim and I have had several chats about your suggestion for a seminar for the senior SA's in this organization. We still feel much as we did after our original conversation with you: we like the idea and think such a seminar can be held with value accruing to all who attend. Seymour tells me some time was devoted to the subject in [REDACTED] staff meeting last Friday and that [REDACTED] feels at the moment that such a seminar should be handled by our faculty rather than hers. If this is the case, we'll be happy to work with you as the idea develops. [REDACTED] will carry the ball for us with additional assistance as needed.

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You asked for comments on any aspect of this idea which might cause trouble so here goes! First, some sad experiences tell us that we'd better be sure that we have a clientele. It's one thing to describe a potential market and another to sell that market. A couple of years ago we pounded a mess of time, material and effort down a rat hole on the strength of one office's say-so and we wound up running the show once for about sixteen people!

Second, we have found that it isn't too helpful to discuss administrative details such as course length, number of students, part-versus full-time courses, and so forth before the objectives are set. It's certainly easy to discuss these homely little angles, and everyone is as much of an expert on them as everyone else, but these are relatively minor points when compared with the problem of writing and gaining acceptance of intelligente and intelligible objectives. Your compatriot, [REDACTED] can fill you in on this angle (although I suspect you don't need much filling in).

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Third, I recall the statement of one of Cornell University's experts, a man who has done more thinking about training methods than you and I put together, to the effect that a man who bought one screwdriver with which to make all the repairs on his car would quickly gain the reputation of being nuts! We may be in danger of being blinded by the attractiveness of this "gaming" concept, of which the In-Basket and other forms of simulation are sub-classifications. So far, nobody has cranked out an all-purpose simulation. There are many types from which to choose and other

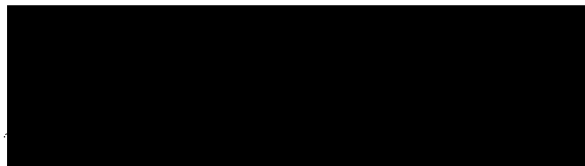
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methods which can do the job. While on this line of thought, don't let the case method run away with your basic idea. There are and there will be really lousy cases and perfectly abysmal case discussion leaders-- even at Harvard! You might like to read "The Case Method at the Harvard Business School" by Malcolm McNair. This is a first-rate book on what it takes to run a course by the case method. Granted that in our little courses we short-circuit much of what the book says, it is still informative reading.

Fourth, implicit in all the above is the plea not to go charging headlong into this good idea of yours. If you desired merely an organized bull-session, all you'd need is a room and a number of mutual acquaintances of ours. We presume, however, that something more professional is required. If there is such a thing as an unprofessional course conducted by OTR, you'll find a primary cause thereof is failure to take the time to do the job right.

Having said all of this, we'd like to repeat that we think the idea can be worked out. Let us know when you want to start building.



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